

A
SCRIPTURAL REFUTATION

OF A

P A M P H L E T,

LATELY PUBLISHED BY THE REV. RAYMUND HARRIS,

INTITLED,

“SCRIPTURAL RESEARCHES

ON THE

LICITNESS, of the SLAVE TRADE.”

In FOUR LETTERS from the AUTHOR
to a FRIEND.

— “ from love of grace
Lay not *his flattering undion* to your souls.”

L O N D O N.

Printed for B. LAW, Ave-Mary Lane, Ludgate Street.

MDCCLXXXVIII.

res. 5575.59 no. 3

A

Scriptural Refutation, &c.

LETTER I.

I HAVE perused with some degree of attention, the very extraordinary pamphlet which you lately sent me, intitled, “*Scriptural Researches on the LICITNESS of the Slave Trade, by the Rev. Raymund Harris;*” in which the author has endeavoured to shew “*its conformity with the principles of natural and revealed religion, as delineated in the sacred writings of the word of God.*”

B

Although

Although I have not that high opinion of the state of improvement, in this age and country, which many persons profess to entertain, yet I own I could not avoid being surpris'd, that either the one or the other, should have been insulted by the publication of a work, which, if its dangerous and destructive principles were admitted in their full extent, would shake the foundations of society, and establish, *by the sanction of divine authority*, every variety of oppression, and every species of guilt.

The short account you gave me of the character and profession of the author, operated however as a sort of comment on his work. The unnatural attachment to slavery—the aversion and dread of the interference of reason and common sense—the artful and subtle positions which are the foundation of his work, appear
totally

totally irreconcilable to the character of an *Englishman*, but are perfectly consistent with that of a *Spanish Jesuit*.

I must not, however, charge the Rev. Raymund Harris, with being the first who has openly attempted the justification of moral guilt, from the books of the old and new testament. So long ago as the beginning of the 15th century, one *John Petit*, a doctor of the church in France, not only publicly justified the murder of the Duke of Orleans, by the Duke of Burgundy, but took occasion, at the same time, to assert the *general legality* (or, as it is now expressed, the *licitness*) of homicide, which he founded on the example of all the murders mentioned in the old testament, by making that a *rule of conduct*, which was only introduced as a *mere historical narrative*.

As I have at present a little leisure, I think I cannot employ it to better purpose, than in stripping the mask from this concealed enemy of order and religion, and exposing him to the world in his proper colours. But before I enter on the examination of his work, it may not be improper to premise, that I shall confine myself to the mode of proof he has himself prescribed; viz. *to that derived from the authority of the sacred writings only* — not thinking it in any degree necessary in the refutation of his work, to resort to those more general arguments which are derived from the nature of man, and the universal principles of truth and justice, as implanted in the human mind, by the immediate hand of its great author; nor availing myself of an objection, which might be reasonably made, viz. That in discussing a matter of right between the Europeans and the Africans,

an

an appeal is made to an authority, which one of the parties only acknowledges as legitimate.

But though I shall confine myself to the proofs and authorities deduced from the sacred writings, yet I cannot so far coincide with Mr. H's wish, as entirely to divest myself of "*the scanty light of mere human reason and sense,*" which, notwithstanding the opprobrium thrown upon it by Mr. H. in his preface, I cannot help thinking, is in some degree necessary, to enable us to understand those writings. Mr. H. indeed afterwards informs us, that he has prefixed to the whole of his work, a few positions or data, which he trusts will be found unquestionably true, and *exactly conformable to sound reason*; and thus, whilst in one breath he impeaches the authority of this ultimate judge

judge of truth, in the next he admits it to question his first principles.

With this permission then, I shall, in the present letter, take the liberty of stating a few of his data, (which are twelve in number) and trying whether they are consistent with sound reason or not; in which I shall endeavour to be as concise as the nature of the subject will admit.

His 1st and 2d positions are,

“ *That the volume of the sacred*
 “ *writings, commonly called the Holy*
 “ *Bible, comprehending both the Old*
 “ *and New Testaments, contains the*
 “ *unerring decisions of the word of*
 “ *God. That these decisions are*
 “ *of equal authority in both the*
 “ *Testaments; and that that au-*
 “ *thority is the essential veracity of*
 “ *God, who is truth itself.*”

Now

Now if we for a moment apply to these positions the touchstone of human reason, we shall find that some of them are fundamentally false; and that all of them are to be understood with many restrictions and exceptions. That the Old and New Testaments contain the unerring decisions of God, where God has expressly given them to us as his decisions, every Christian will readily admit; but it is obvious, that the far greater part of the Old and New Testament, consists, not of *decisions*, but of *mere historical facts*, some of them affording instances of a virtuous, and others of a vicious conduct. That other parts of the scriptures, even where such decisions are found, are not of general use, but are applicable only to *particular times, or to a particular people*. That it is *not true* that the decisions of the Old and New Testament are of equal authority, for that the former is always controlled
by

by the latter; which has totally abrogated many parts of the Mosaic law, and made an essential difference, not only in the ritual, but in the moral duties enjoined by the Old Testament, as I shall hereafter have occasion to shew more at large.

The essence of his four next positions is, *That whatever is declared to be right or wrong in the scriptures, is so in its nature, and cannot be questioned without great presumption; but must be assented to without reserve, however contrary it may be to the opinions of men for any length of time.* But these positions are also laid down in a form, much too general to be admitted by the professors of any religion, except that in which the reverend author was educated. It will readily be granted, that whenever the scriptures have decided on general principles of right and wrong,

wrong, such decisions are unerring; but it must also be granted, that when those decisions have a reference to the situation of a particular person, or a particular nation, they ought not to be arbitrarily and indiscriminately applied to other persons, or other nations: And if from the powers given to the Jews over their enemies, the permission of certain acts in particular cases, and the existence of certain customs amongst them, we were to infer a right in ourselves, to imitate their actions, and practise their customs, whenever we thought there was a similarity in our situation, the book of the Old Testament might be converted into a *general voucher* for the *licitness* of almost every crime, and every enormity, whether national or individual.

Mr. H. proceeds in his 5th datum to state, “ *That if one or more decisions of*

C

“ *the*

“ the written word of God give a
 “ positive sanction to the intrinsic
 “ licitness of any human pursuit, for
 “ instance, the Slave Trade, whoever
 “ professes to believe the incontro-
 “ vertible veracity of the written
 “ word of God essentially incompati-
 “ ble with the least degree of injustice,
 “ must consequently believe the pur-
 “ suit itself to be intrinsically just and
 “ lawful in the strictest sense of the
 “ word.”

From this position then it would seem
 that all actions which have, under the
 Jewish dispensation, been practised by the
 sanction of divine authority, are intrinsi-
 cally and universally right, and may be
 practised by all mankind, in all future
 times, not only without guilt, but with
 the strictest virtue and propriety; and this
 most extensive rule is founded on a pre-
 sumption,

sumption, that what God has, on one occasion, declared to be right, must also be right on all other occasions, without any attention to the particular circumstances of each. Supposing this position to be once granted, it is doubtful whether the depravity of man could commit a crime for which Mr. H. would not, from the sacred writings, extract a better apology than he has already done for the Slave Trade. Thus, for instance, if any man doubted of the inherent licitness of

I N C E S T,

It would be easy for Mr. Harris to point out the example of the daughters of Lot, who each of them conceived by their father,* which transaction, so far from being represented as criminal, not only passes free from the least shadow of reprehension, but the offspring of this in-

C 2 intercourse,

tercourse, became the founders of two powerful nations. Jacob's marrying two sisters,* by each of whom he had children, and who purchased of each other his favors,† would be an express authority. Were a doubt still entertained of the licitness of the crime, Mr. H. might refer to the general laws of the Jews, by which the surviving brother was commanded to go in unto his brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to his brother; and might point out an instance where a refusal to comply with this injunction, brought down upon the offender the immediate vengeance of God.‡ Mr. H. might then advert to the state of mankind in the first age of the world, when the commission of this crime was not only excusable, but indispensibly necessary to the preservation of the species, and thus the

* Gen. c. xxix. † Gen. c. xxx. v. 15.

‡ Gen. c. xxxviii, p. 8.

the inherent licitness of this heinous offence would be much more satisfactorily proved than the lawful nature of the African Slave Trade, notwithstanding the indefatigable labour which Mr. H. has bestowed upon it.

F R A U D.

Should any person entertain scruples of conscience, with respect to the lawfulness of defrauding his neighbour, let him adopt Mr. H's position, and open the Old Testament. He will there find that the patriarch Jacob, the immediate founder and stock of the Jewish nation, under pretence of a purchase, defrauded his brother Esau of his birth right;* and in order to compleat this first piece of treachery, was induced, by a contrivance of the most artful nature, to obtain from his father Isaac, the blessing of the first born,

* Gen. c. xxv, v. 29.

born, to the wrong and prejudice of his elder brother. Should he still remain doubtful, he may turn to another incident in the life of the same patriarch, related at large Gen. c. 30, v. 25. in which he will find a stratagem put in execution by Jacob to defraud Laban, his father-in-law, which, according to his position, will justify the inherent licitness of cheating beyond the shadow of contradiction. To these authentic facts, which were the foundation of Jacob's greatness, he may add the authorities that may be deduced from Ex. c. xi, v. 2. and c. xii, v. 35. where the Israelites abused the confidence of the Egyptians, and deprived them of their jewels, by an express command of their great lawgiver; and the evident conclusion of his *scriptural researches on the licitness of fraud* will be, that every man has an inherent right, by the express sanction of the holy scriptures, to defraud his neighbour; nay,

even

even his brother or his father, as often as it lies in his power.

It would thus be practicable, under the sanction of Mr. H's 7th position, to select, from the books of the Old Testament, the most evident and incontestible authorities, not only for the lawfulness of lying, theft, polygamy, and fornication, but of the more atrocious crimes of murder, adultery, and revenge; but it is irksome to proceed further under the guidance of *so detestable a proposition*, which, under a pretence of paying an implicit deference to the judgments of God, excludes every consideration of a collateral nature, and thereby renders unjust and criminal in its general application, that which in the particular instance, and under peculiar circumstances, was right and lawful, and calls in the authority of
the

word of God to justify the commission of crimes of the deepest dye.

The remainder of the author's data are employed to state in various lights, *that if any act (e. g. the Slave Trade) be abstractedly and essentially lawful, no abuse or mal-practice can render the principle of it criminal; and that no arguments built solely on those abuses, can have any weight, unless the same be proved essentially unjust and illicit.*

To attempt a distinction between the abstract nature of any thing and the effects produced by it, is well worthy one of the disciples of Loyola; but though these subtleties might have passed current in the days of our ancestors they are now somewhat out of season. A sort of maxim has prevailed, that it is improper to reason from the
abuse

abuse of any given subject, against the use of it, but it will surely be granted, that a proneness to abuse is itself strong evidence that something is wrong in the principle. It was not by subtle distinctions of this kind that our Saviour instructed his followers: He taught us to judge of the cause by its effects, and not to suppose that could be right in its principle which was manifestly wrong in its consequences.—“ *A good tree, says he, cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit; wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them,* Matt. chap. vii. v. 18, 20. What have been the fruits of the African Slave Trade I leave to the determination of Mr. H. who, by declining to submit to this test, shews pretty clearly the sense he entertains of the cause he has undertaken to defend.

D

From

From these remarks I trust it will evidently appear, that although the scriptures contain the written will of God, yet, as in reading the sacred volumes we must use our eyes, so, in understanding them, we must make use of our reason. It is true, the Church of Rome prohibits its followers not only from considering, but perusing the scriptures; and requires them to be implicitly acknowledged as equally and invariably true in all parts: But the Protestant Churches have discarded these narrow restraints, and not only permit, but require us to examine the scriptures with the utmost degree of attention and care. Shall we then so far suffer ourselves to be blinded by the propositions, or by the subsequent denunciations of Mr. H. as to give up, at his simple request, a right for which our ancestors struggled at the expence of their blood? Or shall we not rather,

like

like men and protestants, judge for ourselves of the spirit and tendency of the holy scriptures? Under this idea it will then be necessary, before we ground our conduct upon the precepts or examples they afford us, diligently to examine whether such examples and precepts are *of general and universal import*, or only confined to a particular person or people. Whether some things which are allowed or commanded in the Old Testament *be not annulled or explained in the new*, and constantly to make the most accurate distinction between such passages as ought to influence our conduct, and *such as are merely narrative*. By these means we shall perceive, that it would be as absurd to assert that the inhabitants of Great Britain can be justified in carrying away the natives of Africa from their country and friends to perpetual servitude, *because* the Jews had domestic slaves

in their houses, as to suppose that we have a right to destroy all the nations round us, *because* Joshua smote thirty-one kings on the other side of the River Jordan.*

* Josh. c. xii. v. 7.



L E T.

LETTER II.

I HAVE in my former letter shewn, that the *data* required by Mr. H. are such as cannot be granted, without considerable restrictions upon their import, by any person who assumes the character of a protestant, or professes to make use of his reason in the examination of the scriptures. In the present, I shall point out in what manner his subsequent arguments in favour of the Slave Trade, are affected by this correction of his first principles.

Having stated as a position, that every thing contained in the scriptures is equally
true,

true, and universally applicable ; without any exception whatever of *person, time, or place*, or the consideration of *any concurring circumstance*, he proceeds to shew, that the custom of slavery was permitted in the ancient world, and cites the particular examples of Abraham, Joseph, and Joshua, with many texts on the subjects ; occupying the greatest part of his pamphlet with demonstrating, what no one ever thought of denying, viz. *that the Jews were allowed to purchase bond-men and bond-women of the heathen* ; and under certain stipulations to retain in their service, even those of their own country.

But it is surely somewhat extraordinary, that so acute a Logician, after having at such length laid down his premises, and sanctioned them by such numerous appeals to holy writ, should be *so miserably defective* in drawing his conclusions from them.

them. After having shewn the *licitness* of Slavery to the Jews and their immediate ancestors, it might have been expected, that the author would thence have deduced *the right of the Europeans to enslave the inhabitants of Africa*; but on this important head he is totally silent: and the whole of his reasonings, and researches, are equally calculated to prove, *that the negroes have an inherent right to take us and our families and carry us into perpetual slavery, as that we have a right to pursue the African Slave Trade.*

That the Israelites had the permission of the Divine Being, to retain in their service bond-men and bond-women of the heathen, and even of their own nation, for a limited time, is granted; but this permission appears to have been particularly confined to that nation, and was not extended to the rest of mankind:

Nor

Nor is there in Mr. H's researches, the least ground to conclude, that any particular nation succeeded to that extraordinary privilege over other nations, which was exercised by, and allowed to the children of Israel.*

Let us suppose then, that some particular person, accused of exercising a right which interfered with the welfare of his neighbour, should rise up before his judges, and inform them by many authorities, that the same right had been exercised by a certain person, at some former, but remote period of time; and having proved this, to the satisfaction of the court, should sit himself down, in complacent expectation of a decree in his favor.

* That the practice of *Man-stealing*, as the object of a general law, was considered, both under the old and new dispensation, as a crime of the highest magnitude, may appear from Exodus c. xxi. v. 16. Paul's I. Epistle to Tim. c. i. v. 9 and 10.

Would either the judges, or auditors, think him intitled to that decree, till he had also gone one step further, and demonstrated, that *he was the person who had legally succeeded to such right?*

But perhaps Mr. H. will contend, that the permission of retaining slaves *was not confined to the Jews*, but was a *general law*, extending to the whole human race. Now, though I shall by no means acquiesce in this construction of the sacred books, yet let us for a moment see what the author of the pamphlet would gain by such a concession.—The result would simply be, that by the *unerring decision of the great parent of the universe*, the stronger nation or individual would have an *inherent right* to oppress and reduce to servitude, the weaker. A supposition as injurious to the Divine Goodness, as any of those, upon which Mr. H.

E

has

has bestowed the epithets of blasphemous and presumptuous.

Thus then you will perceive, that the ordinances of God are sometimes of a general nature, having reference to all mankind ; and sometimes of a particular nature, having reference only to the people to whom they are immediately delivered. That the first are uniformly and invariably just and true, and that the second are also just and true, when applied to the subject on which they are intended to operate ; but may become unjust, and improper, when applied *at the will of man* to other purposes, and on other occasions.

As I apprehend this to be a distinction of great importance in the present debate, I shall take the trouble of giving you an illustration of it ; by shewing how differently

ently the principles required by Mr. H. operate upon any given subject, when admitted in their full extent, and when taken with the restrictions I have ventured to lay upon them. Let this be taken from the first instance mentioned in the pamphlet, and on which Mr. H. lays the great weight of his cause, asserting, “ That were
 “ all other scriptural evidences wanting in
 “ favor of the Slave Trade, this decree
 “ alone must convince every impartial
 “ reader, that the *licitness* of that trade
 “ is evidently warranted by the written
 “ word of God.”

The story is that of HAGAR* the handmaid of Sarai, who after she had conceived a son by Abram her master, fled from the sight of her mistress, because she dealt hardly with her; and was found near a fountain of water in the wilderness, by an angel of the Lord; who or-

E 2

dered

* Gen. c. xvi.

dered her to return to her mistress, and submit herself under her hands, with a promise that the Lord would multiply her seed exceedingly.

Now in making the *particular instance* of God's dealings with Hagar (for which there is no doubt he had the best and wisest reasons) a *general rule*, to be applied on all similar occasions, Mr. H. attempts to establish a mode of proof, which, if admitted, would tear up the foundations of society;—introduce and sanctify a course of conduct at open variance with the first laws of truth and justice, as derived from God; and render it easy to justify any crime which the most abandoned profligate might be induced to commit.

“ Every circumstance, says he, attending the wretched situation of *this poor African*

“ *African Slave*, who though *legally*
 “ *married to her master*, is kept still
 “ in bondage, and forced as it were out
 “ of his house and service, in the con-
 “ dition she was in *through hard usage*
 “ *and severity*, seems to excite compas-
 “ sion, and justify her escape.”

Having thus allowed the apparent in-justice of Hagar’s sufferings, he proceeds.

“ Were Hagar’s case that of any Afri-
 “ can Female Slave now in the West-
 “ Indies, and were the same to be tried
 “ before a jury composed of *some of the*
 “ *present advocates for African liberty in*
 “ *this island*, one might decide almost to
 “ a certainty in whose favor the verdict
 “ would be given : The slave would most
 “ probably be declared free; and both
 “ master and mistress severely reprimanded,
 “ if not also condemned in a
 “ heavy

“ heavy pecuniary mulct. No other
 “ verdict would be consistent with the
 “ principles *they so publicly avow*.—But
 “ did HAGAR obtain the same favorable
 “ sentence at the impartial tribunal of
 “ God, when she pleaded her cause be-
 “ fore the minister of his justice, whom
 “ he deputed to represent his person?
 “ Did he approve of her conduct in
 “ leaving her master’s house, &c.? Did
 “ he signify to her, that her character of
 “ Abram’s wife, or the severity of Sa-
 “ rah’s treatment, even in her actual
 “ state of pregnancy, emancipated her
 “ from her bondage, rescinded the ori-
 “ ginal contract of her purchase, or that
 “ that contract had been illicit, and
 “ contrary to his laws, &c.? No. On
 “ the contrary, her conduct was con-
 “ demned by the representative of God,
 “ who ordered her in his name to return
 “ to her mistress, and submit herself un-
 der

“ der her hands ; though at the same
 “ time he assured her *that the Lord had*
 “ *heard her affliction.*”

From this most singular comment Mr. H. immediately concludes, “ that the
 “ licitness of the slave trade is evi-
 “ dently warranted by the written word
 “ of God.” But before we allow the
 case of Hagar to be a sanction for a sub-
 sequent course of conduct, of so dissimi-
 lar a nature, let us examine the de-
 ductions which Mr. H. in his forego-
 ing comment has endeavoured to draw
 from this story, and which he must esta-
 blish before it can be of the least service
 to the cause it is introduced to support :
 These evidently are,

I. That in case the cause of Hagar had
 been tried before a just and impartial
 human tribunal, they would have been
 culpable

culpable in deciding upon it according to the known laws of justice and humanity.

II. That on all subsequent occasions, where a person has suffered under the rod of oppression, it is the business of a judge to send back the sufferer to receive further ill treatment.

III. That because Hagar was ordered by an angel to return to her mistress, it is lawful for the merchants of Europe to carry on a Trade for Slaves to the coast of Africa.

I shall close my present letter with a few observations on each of these deductions.

I. The Supreme Being alone can search the hearts of men, and the reasons of *his*
immediate

immediate determinations are not always apparent to his creatures, who can only form their imperfect judgment from external circumstances.—It was therefore no doubt consistent with his wisdom and justice to direct Hagar's return. *He had power to soften the heart of her mistress towards her, and to recompense her obedience as he thought good,*—but would an earthly tribunal have been therefore excusable, in discarding every principle of Justice, and sending Hagar back to receive further ill treatment?—The idea is equally wicked and ridiculous.

II. It seems scarcely possible to conceive a higher degree of presumption, than that of applying the *particular judgments* of God to subsequent purposes and occasions. That a case *exactly similar* in all points to that of Hagar, has ever since happened, may very fairly be doubted; and until that does really hap-

pen, the decree of the Supreme Being appropriated to that case, can never again be applicable. Besides, the powers and faculties of our minds are not sufficiently extensive, to enable us to judge of the circumstances in all their connections, even if such a case should again exist.—To reason therefore from this instance, to others which evidently bear only a *partial or distant resemblance* to it, is the extreme of arrogance; and to act in consequence of such reasoning, would be the extreme of wickedness.

III. But from what circumstances in this story does Mr. H. deduce the very extraordinary conclusion, *That the Slave*
 “ *Trade, even when attended with cir-*
 “ *cumstances not altogether conformable*
 “ *to the feelings of humanity, is essenti-*
 “ *ally consistent with the sacred and in-*
 “ *alienable rights of justice, and has the*
 “ *positive*

“ *positive sanction of God in its sup-*
 “ *port.*” What? Because the Lord, by
 his angel, ordered Hagar to return to
 her master, to whom she was under some
 kind of obligation for service, whether
 voluntary or involuntary does not appear,
 to whom she was *legally married* and by
 whom she was *then pregnant*? Does it
 by any rule of construction follow, that
 Mr. H. or any other person, has an *in-*
herent right, either forcibly, or by the
 colourable pretext of purchase, to seize
 upon an inhabitant, of *Whidah*, or *Congo*,
 whom *he had never before seen*, to carry
 him on board a ship, and expose him for
 several months to variety of dangers,
 and if he survives, to deliver him over
 to a planter, to exhaust the remain-
 der of his days in extreme labour, un-
 der *the immediate discipline of the scourge*?
 —Justice, humanity, and common sense
 equally revolt at such a deduction.—

But as Mr. H. has openly disclaimed all connection with these dangerous guides of human conduct, I shall apply my remark in a different form; and assure him, that whenever a stronger hand than his own, shall hurry him on board a ship, and consign him to the care of an American planter for the rest of his days; the case of Hagar, will, according to his own explanation of it, be as good an authority for this proceeding, as when it was introduced to give a sanction to the African Slave Trade.

L E T T E R I I I.

I F you will keep in view the distinction between a blind and superstitious admission, that every fact authorised in the Old and New Testament, is to be taken as a rule of conduct, without any consideration of concurrent circumstances; and the reasonable and orthodox construction of the scriptures, which I have contended for, viz. That determinations in particular circumstances, and under so peculiar a dispensation as that of the Jews, can be no authority for general conduct; you will hold in your hand a clue, which will safely guide you through all the windings and intricacies
of

of Mr. H's *labyrinth*, and will find, that every other authority he has quoted, will, when examined by this rule, have as little weight in justifying the principle of the Slave Trade, as the story of Abram and Hagar.

For instance,—the history of Joseph's hoarding the corn, and afterwards selling it to the Egyptians, contains a great variety of particular circumstances; all of them intirely different from any thing in the African Slave Trade. Joseph had foreseen the famine, and had prudently made a reserve of corn during the seven years of plenty; by which he had most probably saved the lives of the greatest part of the inhabitants; but have the merchants of Europe ever conferred a similar obligation on the natives of Africa? The purchase of this corn must have amounted to a considerable sum of money,

money, which had been circulated amongst the Egyptians ; and Joseph was therefore in some respects justified in reselling the corn, and perhaps at an advanced price. But have *such* of the natives of Africa as are reduced to slavery, ever received any kind of compensation for the deprivation of every thing dear to them ? In the event it turns out that Joseph did not reduce the Egyptians to a state of actual bondage ; but that he entered into a compact with them, viz. That he should give them seed to sow the land, and that they should have *four parts* of the produce, and Pharaoh the fifth part.

Not one of the inhabitants was sold to any distant country, nor ever removed out of the kingdom of Egypt ; nor does it appear, that any other end was effected by this transaction, than merely the levying a tax of one fifth of the produce throughout

throughout the kingdom.* No subsequent notice being taken in the sacred books, that the inhabitants of Egypt were held in slavery by their own Kings ; on the contrary, it appears that in the following reign, the Egyptians had reduced into slavery the children of Israel, and acted the part of task-masters over them.†

What then shall we think of the reasonableness and modesty of Mr. H. ? who has thought it necessary to employ his time in making a calculation of the number of inhabitants at that period in Egypt ; which he finds to have amounted to seven or eight millions, and which he supposes is a number not unequal to all the purchases of the kind ever made by English merchants, since the commencement of the slave trade !

After

* Gen. c. xlvii, v. 26. † Ex. c. i. v. 8.

After all—will it be said, that under the light we now enjoy in the christian dispensation, the conduct of Joseph ought to be a rule for the conduct of the governor of a country in modern times; even supposing it possible the same events should again come to pass? Would it be consistent with the very positive injunction of our Lord, “ *Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away?*”* The withholding the corn till the people surrendered their lands, and even their personal liberties, implies *a right* in Joseph (though at that time the Governor, and consequently the protector of the country) to withhold the corn, *even though the inhabitants should perish for want of it.*—A position which may well be doubted. And, granting the story in the extent Mr. H. requires, where was the policy or advantage

* Mat. c. v, v. 42.

vantage in Pharaoh being a *Slave-holder* or *Tyrant*, rather than the king of a happy and independent people.

If then the instance of Joseph's conduct towards the Egyptians would not in modern times, under the light of the Gospel, be a sanction for the ruler of a country under similar circumstances, to follow his example—how, in the name of common sense, can it be an authority for the *Slave Trade*? By which, without any pretence of compensation, the inhabitants of Africa are carried away from their native country, and compelled to intense labour; with no further allowance than what is barely sufficient to support their existence? The inhabitants of Egypt enjoyed *four-fifths of the produce of the land*; their countrymen in modern times are not allowed *one fiftieth*. Pharaoh we are told was hard of heart.

What

What then shall we think of the present system of Slavery?

From these instances of Hagar and of Joseph, Mr. H. informs us, he thinks he has sufficiently demonstrated that the Slave Trade has the indisputable sanction of Divine Authority, and is in exact conformity with the principles of the law of nature, as delineated in the sacred writings of the word of God. But whether such reasoning would not disgrace any cause, except the cause it is intended to defend, I leave you to judge.

I now come to that part of Mr. H's work, in which he attempts to shew, that the slave trade is in conformity with the principles of the *Mosaic law*. That such was the practice amongst the Israelites, and that such practice was allowed under the Mosaic institution, I have al-

ready admitted: but before I enter further into the discussion of this part of the question, I shall beg leave to make one observation on the only historical fact cited by Mr. H. under the law as an authority for slavery, viz. that of Joshua's treatment of the inhabitants of Gibeon.

The sacred writings inform us, that the land of Gibeon was given to the children of Israel, who were authorized *by an express revelation from God*, to destroy all the inhabitants of the land.* For what particular crimes in the nations adjacent to the Israelites these heavy judgements were denounced against them, does not appear; such however was the power and authority with which Joshua was invested at the time the event cited by Mr. H. took place.

But

* Josh. c. i. v. 2. 3. and c. ix. v. 24.

But where is the revelation by which the inhabitants of Africa are delivered up to the people of Europe? Where is the authority of the kingdom of England over that of Angola? Whence is it derived? Who hath ever heard it asserted? Or in what writings, sacred or prophane, is it to be found?

This circumstance, then, which is the *foundation and sole justification* of Joshua's subsequent conduct, being wanting in the case to which it is now applied, intirely destroys all similarity between them.

For the Gibeonites having been absolutely delivered up to the power of Joshua, who was authorised, and even commanded to destroy them; he could, with the permission of God, change that severity of treatment to a milder punishment; and from such change, the Gibeonites derived
a great

a great advantage, viz. the preservation of their lives. But have the Slave dealers of Europe saved from destruction and extirpation any of the nations of Africa? Have the judgments of God been denounced against those people, and have such judgments been averted by the humanity or interference of the Europeans? On the contrary, have they not, for ages past, in opposition to the positive laws of God, in open contempt of the Christian religion, and without any other authority than that of being the strongest, desolated and dispeopled one of the most populous and fertile parts of the universe? Whether this has given them a right, equal to that of Joshua over the Gibeonites, I leave to Mr. H. to explain. I must however agree with him in thinking, *that it is easy to conclude, whether the reducing the innocent as well as the guilty part of our fellow creatures to the*
condition

condition of slaves, or even to hereditary bondage or slavery, be in its own nature licit, or illicit, criminal, or unjust. And I trust that no person who has candidly attended to the subject in dispute can have a doubt upon the question.



L E T T E R IV.

I HAVE already admitted, that the practice of slavery was permitted to the Israelites and their immediate ancestors:— But I have at the same time asserted, that such permission *was confined to that people only*, and was not extended to the rest of mankind. I shall now undertake to shew, that the practice of slavery, as allowed to the Israelites, so far from receiving a sanction from, was abolished by the Christian dispensation, as being totally irreconcilable with the first principles of the religion of its divine author.

Mr.

Mr. H. has endeavoured to intrench himself, by every precaution in his power, against the attack, which he well knew his cause was exposed to receive from this quarter, and has stipulated, that the books of the Old and New Testament, shall be considered as of equal authority. But if Mr. H. be as fully satisfied as he pretends to be, that the doctrines of our Saviour are uniformly of the same tendency as those of the Mosaic Law, why does he so earnestly labour to establish a proposition, which the greatest part of his readers will scarcely be inclined to grant him? Does he not appear to have been aware, not only that his cause would derive no authority from the New Testament, but that the dispensations of the new law, might in some respects interfere with and contradict those of the Old?

H

That

That this may reasonably be presumed to be Mr. H's true motive for endeavouring to establish the equal authority of the Old and New Testament, will appear from considering the reason he gives, for having been more particular in bringing the last part of his researches into what he calls a central point of view, viz.

“ That he has reason to apprehend, that
 “ several of his readers would be apt to
 “ imagine, that by the establishment of
 “ the Christian Religion the Law of
 “ Moses was totally abolished, and annu-
 “ nulled in every part of it; and to every
 “ intent and purpose, both typical and
 “ moral.” Now it is impossible for Mr.
 “ H. to be so ignorant as not to know,
 that every sect and denomination of Christians admit the moral precepts of the Old Testament, whenever they do not interfere with the purer doctrines of the Christian scheme—this then could not be
 the

the true motive for his being so particular on this head. The fact is, he hoped that by establishing the equality of the Old Testament to the New, he could with more advantage make the authorities which he pretended to find in the former, for the general justification of slavery, militate against the express and unequivocal precepts against it, which are contained in the latter.

Of what great importance the establishment of this proposition is to Mr. H's argument, will appear from the use he has attempted to make of it. "From
 " this undeniable position, says he, it
 " follows necessarily, that *as the writ-*
 " *ings of both the Testaments have the*
 " *same weight of authority*, essentially in-
 " capable of contradicting itself, in sup-
 " port of those principles and decisions
 " enacted and registered in their respective
 " records, concerning the intrinsic mo-

“ rality or immorality of human actions,
 “ whatever is declared in the one to be
 “ intrinsically good or bad, just or un-
 “ just, licit or illicit, must inevitably
 “ be so *according to the principles of the*
 “ *other*. If therefore the Slave Trade
 “ appears, *as I trust it does*, from the
 “ preceding train of Scriptural Argu-
 “ ments, in perfect harmony with the
 “ principles and decisions of the word
 “ of God, registered in the sacred writ-
 “ ings of the Old Testament, respect-
 “ ing the intrinsic nature of that trade,
 “ this of course can bear no opposition
 “ to, but must necessarily be in equal
 “ perfect harmony with the principles
 “ and decisions of the word of God, re-
 “ specting right and justice,—registered
 “ in the sacred writings of the New.
 “ This general but forcible argument,
 “ were it even unsupported by any col-
 “ lateral evidences from the writings of
 “ the New Testament, would be fully
 “ sufficient

“ sufficient to verify my third and last
 “ assertion respecting the licitness of the
 “ Slave Trade, as perfectly conformable
 “ to the principles of the Christian dis-
 “ pensation.

Thus Mr. H. has reposed the whole weight of his argument in favour of the Slave Trade, under the Christian dispensation (as unsupported by any collateral evidence from the writings of the New Testament) on this single proposition, “ *that the writings of both the Testaments have the same weight of authority.*” I shall therefore first proceed to give the most indubitable evidence that *this is not the fact*; and that the New Testament *not only possesses, but has exercised* a controlling power over the Old, *even in points of moral conduct*, in consequence of which, “ This general and
 “ forcible argument, which is itself suf-
 “ ficient

“ ficient to verify the assertion that the
 “ licitness of the Slave Trade is perfectly
 “ conformable to the principles of the
 “ Christian dispensation,” will be found
 “ entirely groundless ; — after which I
 shall proceed to consider what he calls his
 collateral evidences derived from the New
 Testament.

After having, with some indecency of
 expression, asserted that “ God never did,
 nor ever could, alter by any dispensa-
 tion whatever, those eternal principles
 and laws, which are the very basis and
 foundation of true religion ; and conse-
 quently of the religion of Christ,” he
 adduces, as he says, “ no less an autho-
 “ rity in confirmation of this indisputable
 “ doctrine, than the very words of the
 “ Son of God, who in that divine ser-
 “ mon on the mount, in which he gave
 “ his disciples a most minute and circum-
 stantial

“stantial account of the principles and
 “tenets of his gospel, condemned the
 “above erroneous opinion in the most
 “explicit terms, and forbad them even
 “to think of it. *Think not, said he, that*
 “*I am come to destroy the law or the*
 “*prophets; I came not to destroy but to*
 “*fulfil.*”

This being the only authority produced by Mr. H. in support of his assertion, of *the equality of the Old and New Testament*, I shall first point out, what I conceive to be the true purport of that passage; and shall afterwards produce such authorities, in support of my opinion, as I think the warmest friends of Mr. H. must admit to be decisive on the point in question.

“*Think not, says our Saviour, that I*
 “*am come to destroy the law and the pro-*
 “*phets;*

“ *phets ; I am not come to destroy but to*
 “ *fulfil.*”

By which is clearly to be understood, that he came not to overthrow those first principles of morality, which are inculcated in the Old Testament, *but to improve and carry them to a higher degree of perfection ;* and accordingly in the second of his discourse, he adverts to *many actions and modes of conduct* which were permitted under the old law, but which he declares are *improper*, and *actually prohibits*, thereby making a most essential difference between the morality of the Old Testament and that of the new.

Matt. c. v. v. 21. “ Ye have heard that
 “ it was said by them of old time, thou
 “ shalt not kill ; and whosoever shall kill,
 “ shall be in danger of the judgment.

22. But

“ 22. But I say unto you, that who-
 “ soever is angry with his brother with-
 “ out a cause, shall be in danger of the
 “ judgment, &c.

“ 27. Ye have heard that it was said
 “ by them of old time, thou shalt not
 “ commit adultery.

“ 28. But I say unto you, that who-
 “ soever looketh on a woman to lust after
 “ her, hath committed adultery already.
 “ with her in his heart.

“ 38. Ye have heard that it hath
 “ been said, an eye for an eye, and a
 “ tooth for a tooth.—

“ 39. But I say unto you, that ye
 “ resist not evil; but whosoever shall
 “ smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to
 “ him the other also.

I

“ 43. Ye

“ 43. Ye have heard that it have
 “ been said, thou shalt love thy neigh-
 “ bour and hate thine enemy.

“ 44. But I say unto you, *love your*
 “ *enemies, bless them that curse you, and*
 “ *pray for them which despitefully use*
 “ *you and persecute you.*”

Could any doubt remain after considering the foregoing passage, as to the meaning of our Saviour's declaration, that *he came not to destroy but to fulfil*, or the superior and controlling power of the Christian dispensation, the following explicit declaration of the apostle Paul, upon the subject, will perhaps have as much weight as the positive assertions of Mr. H. to the contrary.

Heb. c. 7. v. 18. “ *For there is verily*
 “ *a disannulling of the commandment going*
 “ *before*

“ *before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.*

“ 19. *For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh unto God.*

“ 22. *By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better Testament.*”

Thus then it appears to demonstration, that the Christian religion, is not only superior to the Mosaic institution, but that its authority was exerted to change or make void, or in the words of the apostle, “ *to disannul the commandment going before;*” and consequently all denominations of Christians must admit, that wherever the sanctions and ordinances of the Old Testament, interfere with the purer doctrines and more hu-

mane precepts of the New, they are not to be regarded as of sufficient weight to justify the followers of Christ, in the imitation of them.

Nor is it from this circumstance to be presumptuously inferred (as Mr. H. affects to think) “ That God is not consistent
 “ with himself; or that the religion of
 “ the New Testament, instead of being
 “ the perfection and accomplishment, is
 “ the reproach and condemnation of the
 “ old law.” The Mosaic institution was not of general import, but was principally confined to the Jews; and contained regulations, both of a civil and religious nature, proper to that people, under a Theocratic Government, but inapplicable in many instances to mankind in general.—Nor was it in many respects so pure and perfect in its moral precepts, as that with which mankind were afterwards favoured.

favoured. Upon this point the testimony of the apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians (who appear to have receded from the gospel dispensation to the inadequate precepts of the old law) is so peculiarly applicable, that I cannot avoid citing it as a full answer to Mr. Harris's charge of inconsistency in the Old and New Testaments.

Galatians c. 3. v. 19. “ *Wherefore then serveth the law?* It was added because
 “ of transgressions, till the seed should
 “ come to whom the promise was made,
 “ and it was ordained by angels in the
 “ hand of a mediator.

“ 21. *Is the law then against the promises of God?* God forbid—for if there
 “ had been a law given, *which could*
 “ *have given life—verily righteousness*
 “ *should have been by the law.*

“ 22. But

“ 22. But the scripture hath concluded
 “ all under sin—that the promise by faith
 “ of Jesus Christ might be given to them
 “ that believe.

“ 23. But *before faith came* we were
 “ kept under the law, shut up unto the
 “ faith, which should afterwards be re-
 “ vealed.

“ 24. Wherefore *the law was our school*
 “ *master* to bring us unto Christ, that
 “ we might be justified by faith.

“ 25. But *after that faith is come* we
 “ *are no longer under a schoolmaster.*”

From this passage then it will appear,
 that the daring accusation thrown out
 by Mr. H. that the Supreme Being
 is inconsistent with himself, because
 he

he did not, under the Christian dispensation, confirm and confine himself to every moral injunction of the Old Testament, can only be made *such persons*, as having for interested purposes attempted to establish a system which the evident purport of the Scriptures cannot support; have no method to hide their disgrace, but by this direct and dreadful imputation on the sacred writings and their Divine author.

It is also equally evident from the foregoing passages of the New Testament, not only that the moral prohibitions of our Saviour extended further than the injunctions of the old law, and rendered that conduct *unlawful*, which had before been permitted, but that such prohibitions actually extended to the particular case in question, and that *all practices*, inimical to the general welfare and interests

terests of mankind, were from thenceforth to be abolished; for if it be the duty of a Christian not to resist evil—to love his enemies—to bless those that curse, and pray for those who persecute him,—how can it be supposed that he shall at the same time have an inherent right to do evil to another—to injure those who never injured him—and to destroy those, who so far from having either persecuted, or cursed him, have never known that such a person was in existence?

I do not conceive it necessary to follow Mr. H. through the *tedious argument*, by which he labours to prove, that the silence of the New Testament respecting *the Slave Trade*, (supposing it to be silent on the subject) is a virtual approbation of that practice. The New Testament is totally silent on many *crimes* of the greatest magnitude, if such silence is to be
inferred

inferred from its not containing *particular prohibitions against them*;—but will any person contend that such crimes are lawful, because no specific denunciations are pronounced against them by our Saviour? Or are they not understood to be included in those general prohibitions and commands, to love our neighbour as ourselves, which compose the sum and essence of the Christian religion?

But if the Books of the New Testament be silent on many particular offences, they lay down general and most powerful precepts for the regulation of the heart and life, leaving the professors of Christianity to apply these precepts to particular cases; and they who have imbibed the true spirit of charity, breathed in the gospel, will not find it necessary to adopt a long train of reasoning, in order to perceive whether the *Slave Trade* be lawful, or not; but as soon as they understand its nature and

consequences, will feel a lively conviction,
that christianity abhors the practice.

The implied arguments of Mr. H. in favour of the Slave Trade, from *the exact conformity of the moral precepts of the New Testament with those of the Old*, and from *the silence of the New Testament on that specific crime*, being thus sufficiently refuted ; it may now be proper to turn to what he calls his collateral proofs from the New Testament, or those passages which he pretends afford a positive sanction to the Slave Trade, under the New Law.

This sanction he conceives he has found in two of the Epistles of Paul, viz. The 1st of those to Tim. c. vi. v. 1, and that to Philemon, v. 8.

But what shall we say, if this slender
 twig,

twig, which is now the only support of the sinking advocate of Slavery, should desert him; and it should appear, from a candid and dispassionate examination of the passages in question, that the precepts of the apostle, introduced by Mr. H. to justify a course of conduct in direct opposition to the precepts of Christianity, afford not the slightest inference inimical to the general rules of good will and benevolence inculcated in other parts of the New Testament.

In the passage first cited by Mr. H. Tim. c. vi. v. 1, the apostle Paul exhorts
 “ as many as are under the yoke, to count
 “ their masters worthy of all honour, that
 “ the name of God and his doctrine be
 “ not blasphemed; and that they who
 “ have believing masters, should not despise them, because they are brethren,
 “ but rather do them service, &c.” —

From whence he infers, “ that the primitive Christians were not only not forbidden, but *expressly allowed*, by the principles of our religion, the purchasing of slaves, and keeping their fellow creatures, nay, even their fellow christians, under the yoke of bondage or slavery.”

Now taking for granted, what perhaps may well be disputed, that the persons spoken of in this passage were slaves for life,—it must be remembered, that the great author of the Christian system did not think proper to oppose his authority to the political arrangements which at the time of his mission subsisted on the face of the earth. His doctrines always inculcated submission to superiors, and patience under injuries ; and this doctrine the apostle applies in the present instance, to a particular class of persons, to whom
he

he thought such admonitions were necessary ; requiring them “ to count their masters worthy of all honour,” meaning thereby, that during the continuance of their servitude (the origin, nature, or duration of which does not appear,) they should perform their duty, and patiently submit to the situation in which they were placed ; but by no means justifying any person *who held another in illegal or forcible subjection*. The apostle exhorts these servants to account their masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed ; *but* which Christian like submission, and forbearance, *though an act of virtue in the servant*, could by no means justify, but would rather tend to aggravate, the crime of the master. In exact conformity to this doctrine is the precept of our Saviour, “ *If any one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*” But
will

will Mr. H. maintain that it is lawful to strike a Christian, because his religion commands him not to resist evil? Or is it not rather the highest aggravation, that the meek and peaceable deportment of the person offended, could not secure him from insult and abuse?

The long quotation Mr. H. has made from the Epistle of Paul to Philemon, is so far from being a justification of slavery, that to every person not perusing the scriptures with a particular bias on his mind, it is evidently a powerful exhortation against it. The apostle sends back Onesimus to his master, requesting him to receive him, “ *not as a servant, but above a servant ;* “ *a brother beloved, especially to me, but* “ *how much more unto thee, both in the* “ *flesh and in the Lord.*” Where does the apostle address Philemon in the words expressly attributed to him by Mr. H. “ *that*
be

he would never attempt to deprive him of his slave ?” Where does he acknowledge to Philemon, “ that Onesimus is his own brother in Christ, though *still his property according to the flesh ?*” These passages seem to be the last resort of a person, who, not being able to support his assertion from the evident purport of the words, is obliged to have recourse to *forgery and interpolation.*

Such however are the grounds upon which Mr. H. has ventured to infringe upon the positive commands of our Saviour, with respect to our conduct towards each other ;—but an apprehension arising in his mind, that these passages might, after all the pains employed in enforcing them, be insufficient to answer his purpose, whilst the precepts of good will given to mankind in the New Testament remained unimpeached—he finds
it

it necessary, in the last place, to abridge the purport of these precepts, and to weaken their influence. For this purpose, he selects out of the many similar passages which the New Testament affords, one which he conceives may bear a more limited sense; and be explained in such a manner, as not to appear inconsistent with his favourite establishment. Whether he has been fortunate in his selection will appear from a short investigation.

Matt. c. vii. v. 12. " All things
 " whatsoever ye would that men should
 " do to you, do ye even so to them; for
 " this is the law and the prophets."

This divine precept, delivered by Christ to his disciples at the conclusion of his sermon on the mount, is so strict an injunction against every kind of injustice and oppression; expressed in a manner so forcible,

forcibly, and prescribing a test of our conduct so easily applied upon every occasion, that Mr. H. was aware it could not be overlooked in this controversy; and he has accordingly employed the utmost of his sophistry to evade its import.

After stating the passage, he gives the converse of it in the following words.

“ Whatsoever things therefore we
 “ would not that men should do to us,
 “ we are not even so to do to them; but
 “ no person whatever would certainly
 “ wish that a fellow creature should re-
 “ duce him to the condition of a slave,
 “ therefore no person whatever is to re-
 “ duce a fellow creature to that con-
 “ dition.”

“ Here, says he, I must observe, that

L .

“ no.

“ no one can justly tax me with any
 “ partiality to the cause I have espoused;
 “ I have, I think, worded the argument
 “ against it, in terms as forcible as the
 “ most zealous advocate for African li-
 “ berty could use; but unanswerable as
 “ the same may appear to them, it is but
 “ *a plausible argument at the best.*

“ It is an axiom in logic, that an ar-
 “ gument that proves too much, proves
 “ nothing—*the above is just such a one;*
 “ for by the same manner of reasoning,
 “ one might equally conclude, contrary
 “ to the law, and the prophets, and the
 “ doctrine of the Christian Religion, that
 “ not only slavery, but every other kind
 “ of subordination of one man to ano-
 “ ther, ought not to be suffered to con-
 “ tinue in the world. The argument, if
 “ conclusive in the former case, must be
 “ equally

“ equally so in the latter. I enforce it
 “ thus:—

“ *All things whatsoever*, says our
 “ blessed Saviour, *that men should do to*
 “ *you, do ye even so to them, for this is*
 “ *the law and the prophets*. Whatsoever
 “ things therefore we would not that
 “ men should do to us; we are not even
 “ so to do to them; but every person
 “ would naturally wish not to be con-
 “ trouled by a fellow creature, not to
 “ be *under any subjection* to him, but to
 “ be absolute master of his own actions;
 “ no person therefore ought to keep a fel-
 “ low creature under any controul or sub-
 “ jection whatever.”

Surely so manifest a perversion of the
 precepts of Christ, never before disgraced
 the press. *It is not true* that every per-
 son would wish *not to be controuled by a*

fellow creature, nor to be under any subjection to him, but to be absolute master of his own actions. Every man of common sense knows, that from the constitution of the universe, he is dependant on, and must necessarily in many respects be controuled by others ; and none but an idiot would wish to be discharged from the relative duties of life, and to be absolute master of his own actions. Nor is any situation in life exempt from this general law, which by an interchange of good offices binds together the vast fabrick of society—but every man may reasonably object to his being *forcibly reduced to a state of slavery*, and deprived of those natural rights which the rest of mankind enjoy—a state which so far from occasioning an interchange of good offices, gives rise on the one hand only to pride, cruelty and injustice ; and on the other, to fear, meanness, and hatred. It does not then
by

by any means follow, that *because* mankind have an uniform aversion to a state of slavery, they have *therefore* a dislike to all the other natural and just subordinations and dependencies of life; and Mr. H's impeachment of this precept is therefore as unfounded as all his other attempts to explain away the evident purport of the doctrines of the New Testament.

Having found that the sense evidently implied in, and universally understood from these words, is not the true one, he gives us his own definition of it.—

“ Every Christian, says he, is taught and
 “ directed to do unto others as he would
 “ be done unto, and by a necessary
 “ consequence, not to do unto others as
 “ he would not be done unto;—that is,
 “ says he, every Christian is commanded
 “ to behave to his neighbour in what-

“ ever

“ ever situation or circumstances in life
 “ *providence may have placed them both,*
 “ just as he would wish his neighbour to
 “ behave to him, in his situation, were
 “ his neighbour’s situation and circum-
 “ stances his own.” Despicable evasion!
 Wretched sophistry! Shall a man, who
 has voluntarily and forcibly reduced ano-
 ther to a state of the most abject misery
 of which his nature is capable, impiously
 assert that *providence has placed him in*
that situation? Shall he satisfy himself
 with the plausible pretext of acting with
 kindness towards him, whilst he has it in
 his power to extend to him that mercy
 which *in the same situation he would him-*
self most ardently wish for. As well might
 the midnight murderer, who holds the
 knife over the innocent victim of his cru-
 elty, assert that *providence had delivered*
him into his hands, and claim a merit in
 putting him to death with as little pain

as possible. Surely if it be the duty of a Christian, to relieve those who are in situations of distress, it is *not less* incumbent on him to place them in a better situation, as often as it lies in his power.

That the Christian religion is inimical in its nature to every species of oppression, and particularly to that which involves in it almost every other kind of guilt, is I hope already evident. But as a further confirmation of this sentiment, it may not be improper to shew, what has been the general sense of mankind as to the spirit and purport of the Christian religion. So opposite are its precepts to the encouragement of slavery, that a celebrated historian,* has not scrupled to account for the degree of liberty, which is at present enjoyed throughout most parts

* Robertson's Hist. Charles V. Proofs and illust. v. 1, note 20.

parts of Europe, from the influence of this religion on the minds of the people.

—I shall give you the passage.—

“ The gentle spirit of the Christian
 “ religion, together with the doctrines
 “ which it teaches concerning the ori-
 “ ginal equality of mankind, as well
 “ as the impartial eye with which the
 “ Almighty regards men of every con-
 “ dition, and admits them to a partici-
 “ pation of his benefits, are inconsistent
 “ with servitude; but in this, as in many
 “ other instances, *considerations of interest*,
 “ and *the maxims of false policy*, led men
 “ to a conduct inconsistent with their
 “ principles. They were so sensible,
 “ however, of their inconsistency, that
 “ to set their fellow Christians at liberty
 “ from servitude, was deemed an act of
 “ piety highly meritorious and accept-
 “ able to heaven. The *humane spirit*
 “ *of the Christian religion* struggled with
 the

“ the maxims and manners of the world,
 “ and *contributed more than any other*
 “ *circumstance to introduce the practice*
 “ *of manumission.*”

The same author furnishes us with an authentic document, as a proof of this fact; which as it proceeds from the apostolic chair, will have its due weight with Mr. H. It contains the reasons assigned by Pope Gregory the Great, in the sixth century, for granting liberty to his slaves.

“ Cum Redemptor noster, totius con-
 “ ditor naturæ, ad hoc propitiatus, hu-
 “ manam carnem voluerit assumere, ut
 “ divinitatis suæ gratia, dirempto (quo
 “ tenebamur captivi) vinculo, pristinæ
 “ nos restituerit libertati; salubriter agiter,
 “ si homines, *quos ab initio liberos na-*
 “ *tura protulit, & jus gentium jugo sub-*
 M “ stituit

“ stituit servitutis, in ea qua nati fuerant, manumittentis beneficio, libertate reddantur.”*

And the usual tenor of the charters of manumission is—*pro amore dei—pro remedio animæ*, &c. clearly expressing the sense the inhabitants of Europe have entertained, that the manumission of slaves was an act *in conformity to the precepts of the Christian religion*.

Were I to continue these authorities down to the present times, and cite to Mr. H. the opinions of the many respectable clergymen of every sect in these kingdoms

* Seeing that Jesus Christ, the author of all nature, for this express purpose, assumed the flesh, that by the favour of his divine power (the bonds of captivity being broken) he might restore us to our former liberty : We conceive it to be devoutly done, if, by the favour of manumission, MEN, whom nature originally made free, and human laws subjected to the yoke of servitude, were again restored to that liberty in which they were born.

kingdoms who have opposed this unlawful traffic; some of them *solely and expressly* on the ground of its being contrary to the dictates of the Christian Religion, they would perhaps have little weight with him; but with the rational and dispassionate part of mankind, they will not be without their effect; and will be no inconsiderable authority, towards the deduction which I conceive I may fairly be allowed to make from the foregoing remarks, viz. THAT THE PRACTICE OF SLAVERY, AS ALLOWED AMONGST THE JEWS, WAS ABROGATED BY THE GOSPEL DISPENSATION, AND DOES NOT NOW EXIST EITHER IN THEIR IMMEDIATE DESCENDANTS OR IN ANY OTHER PEOPLE.

If Mr. H. remains dissatisfied with a conclusion in such direct opposition to the *long corollaries* at the end of his book,

he must contend, that the particular privilege granted to the Jews, and their ancestors, *is not annulled*, but yet exists in full force. And, as I have before remarked, must, *if such a privilege be hereditary*, institute an enquiry into their *lineal descendants*, amongst whom I apprehend he will find some difficulty in inrolling the inhabitants of these kingdoms.

But if he denies also this last proposition ; and asserts that the permission of holding others in slavery, was given indiscriminately to all mankind ; I must beg you once more to consider for a moment *the consequences and absurdities of such a position*. If all mankind possess from God, an inherent right to reduce into subjection any others of their species, this right is inherent as well in the slave as in his master, who will therefore be perfectly justified

justified in making use of his utmost exertions to *change situations with him*; and should he succeed in his attempt, will, *in his turn*, have “the positive sanction of God,” for *holding by force his former master in subjection to him*. Thus then this universal permission or *licitness* of slavery, contended for by the author of the pamphlet, terminates in a vindication of universal oppression,—in an assertion of the right of the stronger, at all times to injure and oppress the weaker. In short, in a general annihilation of all those restraints, which Law, Reason, Religion, and Common Sense, have hitherto imposed upon mankind.

T H E E N D.

